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ABSTRACT

To be used in conjunction with a document providing evaluation criteria for quality elementary school programs, this guide is designed to help members of a program review team conduct a program review. The first chapter describes the methodology and procedures of program review, the application of quality criteria to the school's curricular and instructional program, and the means by which suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program might be developed. The second chapter describes the quality criteria and contains cautions for reviewers about the application of the criteria to the school program. The final chapter describes how the transaction between the review team and the school results in a design for improving the program offered to the students. (Appendices contain the quality criteria and a guide for schools conducting a self-study.) (HOD)

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Handbook for Conducting an Elementary Program Review

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Bill Honig—Superintendent of Public Instruction
Sacramento, 1985

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Handbook for Conducting an Elementary Program Review

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HANDBOOK FOR CONDUCTING AN ELEMENTARY PROGRAM REVIEW

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PREFACE

This guide, Handbook for Conducting an Elementary Program Review, is to be used in conjunction with the Elementary Program Quality Criteria document. It has been designed to assist members of a program review team through the process of conducting a program review. The review team may consist of a majority of persons, including the lead, who are outside the district as is the case in a formal program review, or the team may be made up of school staff and parents who wish to conduct a self-study on an informal basis. The program review process has been designed for judging the effects of the curriculum, instructional methodologies, and effectiveness strategies on the students; for guiding the development of planned assistance; and providing a model for the school's own self-study process.

The handbook is divided into three chapters. Chapter I describes the methodology and procedures of program review, the application of quality criteria to the school's curricular and instructional program, and the means by which suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program might be developed. Chapter II describes the quality criteria and contains cautions for reviewers about the application of the criteria to the school program. Chapter III describes how the transaction between the review team and the school results in a design for improving the program offered to the students.

Appendix A contains the quality criteria, and Appendix B is the guide to be used by schools in conducting a self-study. All schools scheduled for a program review will complete a self-study prior to their review. It's hoped that other schools will find this guide useful as they assess the quality of their program during their planning process.

Both state and federal laws mandate the periodic review of schools receiving special funding through the consolidated application. It is hoped, however, that all schools, regardless of funding, will find the program review beneficial in their efforts to provide high-quality education for all students.

JAMES R. SMITH
Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum
and Instructional Leadership

HARVEY K. HUNT
Director, Office of Special Projects

PHILIP A. DARO
Manager of Project Development

SALLY L. MENTOR
Assistant Superintendent
Instructional Support Services
Division

MARGARET J. GASTON
Manager, Office of School
Improvement

CHAPTER I: THE PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

Program Review Overview

Purpose of Program Review

The primary purpose of program review is to improve the quality of curriculum and instruction. It is a means for developing and sustaining a high-quality educational program for all students.

Scope of the Program Review

The program review process described in this handbook focuses on the extent to which the school's curriculum, instructional methodologies, and effectiveness strategies contribute toward the goal of a high-quality educational program for each student.

The quality criteria used in program review address the two major aspects of a school program--curriculum, or what is being taught, and the schoolwide policies, practices, and procedures that shape and support instruction. The curricular criteria include:

- Reading
- Written Language
- Oral Language
- Mathematics
- Science
- History-Social Studies
- Visual and Performing Arts

The schoolwide criteria include:

- Instructional Programs: Schoolwide Effectiveness
- Services to Students with Special Needs
- The Learning Environment
- Staff Development
- Leadership
- Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating

Review Strategy

The review strategy is based on the Quality Criteria contained within the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria. Through a combination of observation of the instructional program and its impact on students, recounted perceptions of those at the school, and documented evidence presented to the team, the reviewers develop an understanding of the current effectiveness of the school program (diagnosis), an analysis of why the program elements are as they are, and determination of the kind of changes that should occur to improve the program of the students (assistance design).

Establishing an understanding of the school program requires an organized effort. This understanding is developed by having a clear idea of the school's curricular emphases, by observing individual students, by analyzing students' current work, by compiling instructional staff and student explanations of students' current and past activities, and by reviewing instructional and management material used by the staff. These observations are supplemented by discussions with staff and parents. Finally, this compiled knowledge forms the basis for the reviewers' judgment of the effect of instruction on the student.

As the reviewers begin to understand the situation for the students, they also seek to find out what processes at the school have contributed to the current situation. The reviewers seek explanations from the school staff that detail why they do things as they do and how curricular decisions are made; where the instructional program comes from; how it is supported and improved; how plans are implemented; and so on. This analysis forms the basis for the reviewers' suggestions for improving instruction and guides the development of the assistance design.

As the reviewers complete the review, a report of findings is prepared in concert with the key program planners at the school. The report provides two types of findings: (1) the extent to which the quality of each aspect of the program reviewed matches the standard of the quality criteria (diagnosis); and (2) suggestions for improving or sustaining the effectiveness of the program, including assistance plans for implementing selected suggestions (assistance).

By developing the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the program with the school's key planners and principal, the reviewers identify prime improvement areas and indicate how the improvement process at the school can improve or sustain the quality of the program. Local, county, regional, and state resources are also considered in framing the assistance plans.

Relationship Between Program Review and Ongoing Planning and Evaluation

Reviews conducted by reviewers from outside the school can provide a fresh viewpoint and independent validation of internal review findings. Use of the program review procedures by the people at a school prior to an external review and familiarity with the school's own data profile can do much to enhance the effectiveness of the external review. Familiarity with the review criteria and procedures will help staff and parents communicate effectively with reviewers, and help reviewers obtain the information they need to make informed judgments.

In short, the program review process yields information that is essential to effective development of the school's curriculum and instructional program--information about what is working well and why, and what should be changed. Program review should be a valuable part in the program improvement cycle of planning, implementing the planned program, evaluating the program, and modifying the planned program.

Program Review Responsibilities

In order for the program review to yield results likely to be useful in developing and sustaining a high-quality educational program, members of the review team and the school community must recognize their roles and responsibilities within the process in three critical areas: establishing an idea of what is currently happening at the school, identifying areas of the school program in need of improvement, and developing an assistance plan that provides a framework for the improvement effort.

The school's key planners, a small group of representative adults involved in the instructional program, are responsible for establishing a link between the review team and the school community. They provide information to the review team in a way that enhances the development of a complete

and cohesive picture of the school's curriculum and instructional programs.

The key planners, usually five to seven in number, are designated by the principal. They are selected representatives from the classroom, curriculum or grade level chairpersons, program coordinators, resource or specialist teachers, or any other school staff members who are a significant part of the school's planning process. District personnel, SSC chairpersons, other committee or PTA chairpersons and parents who are knowledgeable about the school's program may be included.

The principal and key planners assist the school community and reviewers in all aspects of program review. They also serve as leaders in the school's self-study process, and assist the team in its information gathering efforts during the review preparation meeting and other formal and informal ongoing meetings. Their responsibilities also include (1) building, in a collaborative effort with the review team, selected suggestions into assistance plans; and (2) providing active leadership roles in the school's implementation of these plans after the team leaves.

Major responsibilities of the reviewers. The major responsibilities of the reviewers are:

- To conduct the review thoroughly enough for the development of a clear and accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the instructional program
- To use that knowledge to make usable suggestions for increasing or sustaining the effectiveness of the program

In order to fulfill these responsibilities, each reviewer must also:

- Be fully conversant with the quality criteria and the process of program review.
- Review thoroughly the curriculum frameworks, handbooks, K-8 curriculum guides, and literature related to the areas to be reviewed.
- Put aside any bias toward any particular program or method.
- Use the school data summary and the self-study findings to facilitate discussions with school staff and parents. These discussions should cover the curriculum and instructional program, how well it is working, and provide evidence sufficient to verify, extend, clarify, enrich, or repudiate those findings.
- Be able to reflect back to the school--as a mirror--the picture he or she has developed of the current effectiveness of the school program.
- Recognize and support the program improvement efforts of the school community.

Major responsibilities of the school community. While the review team is responsible for learning as much about the program as can be learned in a limited period of time, the school community is responsible for making sure that the team is gaining accurate and complete information about the program. A school community prepares for program review by conducting a required self-study (Appendix B). A thorough review of their program, using the quality criteria, will enable the members to know how well

their program is working and why. With this knowledge the school community will be able to assist the reviewers in gathering accurate information about the program so that the findings of the review--especially the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program--will be complete.

The major responsibilities of the staff, parents, and community members involved in a program review are:

- To know the curriculum and planned instructional program and how they affect the students
- To be familiar with the program review process and the quality criteria
- To be involved as a total staff in the self-study and in identifying program strengths and areas in need of improvement in relation to the program review quality criteria by spelling out activities that are working and those that are not
- To be ready to share this knowledge with the review team and to be able to direct reviewers to the information they need to fulfill their responsibilities

Program Review Methodology

The methods used in gathering information about the program include observation, interview, and documentation. Information gathered through each method is verified by information from one or both of the other sources. When combined, the data gathered from the three methods should form a complete picture of the program. The use of specific procedures should ensure that the review will be thorough and consistent. This view of the program is then compared with the quality criteria. From that comparison come the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program or recognitions of program strength. Throughout this process the reviewer will be guided by the quality criteria (see Chapter II of this handbook) that identify areas of the program to be investigated and provide directions to reviewers for collecting information about the school program.

The criteria used for judging program quality describe the curriculum, instructional methodologies, and effectiveness strategies and their effects on the students. Each criterion contains features of a high-quality program. The quality criteria are designed for use with the review procedures enumerated in this handbook and with the "Guide for Applying the Criteria." The reviewer's job is to determine to what extent each aspect of the program being reviewed fits the description of a high-quality program.

Classroom Observation

Through classroom observations, the reviewers gather information about how the various instructional methods, the curriculum, and effectiveness strategies operate in the classroom setting. This

information is collected to develop a complete understanding of the program and its effect on the student. Insight into the effects of the staff development activities, as well as instructional support and planning activities, also emerges through classroom observations. Upon entering the classroom, reviewers should spend a few minutes observing what is happening, remembering that they are putting together an initial picture rather than making a judgment at this point; that each impression will need to be verified through further observation and informal interview as well as through other sources; and that first impressions may be influenced by personal bias.

These initial observations should include:

- What the students are doing: Receiving instruction? Applying skills? Practicing newly acquired skills? Synthesizing and evaluating information? Waiting? Playing? Causing a disturbance?
- How the classroom is being managed: Is it task-oriented? Conducive to learning?
- Range of activities taking place from acquisition of knowledge to higher level learning skills
- How students are grouped and how individual assistance is provided
- How much time the students actually spend on the assigned activity: Do they know what to do?
- How students are applying the skills being learned
- How students with special needs are participating in the classroom activities
- How the instructional settings are varied according to the needs of the student and/or what is to be learned
- Any evidence of balance in the curriculum; i.e., visual and performing arts, history/social science, and science.

The information gained through these initial observations is built upon using as guides the curricular and schoolwide criteria.

NOTE: Classroom observation includes informal interviews with students and staff, based upon what has been observed, as well as the observation of activities.

Interview

The basic information gained through classroom observation is verified, clarified, and expanded through interviews. Interviews enable the reviewers to learn how the program came to be the way it is, as well as to better understand the program as it is.

By using what is known about the curriculum and instructional program thus far, reviewers conduct both informal and formal group interviews. Examples of informal interviews include asking questions of the students and teachers in the classroom, talking with aides working with students, talking with teachers in the teachers' lounge, and so forth. Formal group interviews are conducted with teachers, aides, councils/committees, district personnel, support staff, and volunteers. The interviews serve several major purposes:

- Verifying data obtained from other sources
- Collecting data that have not been gathered from other sources
- Resolving conflicts in data collected
- Giving people the opportunity to share past experiences, present conditions, or future plans which the reviewers might not have uncovered
- Offering an opportunity for people to ask questions of the review team

Review of Data, Policies, and Other Documents

Documentation helps to verify, expand, and clarify what is learned through classroom observations and interviews. The information in the School Data Summary forms ar initial base for the review as it contains a broad sample of information about the student population, adult and student expectations, the curriculum point of view, achievement information, and other data. Reviewers should not read documents for the sake of establishing that such recordkeeping exists, but rather for the purpose of developing a complete understanding of what the program in action is really like. A school, on the other hand, should not create documents for the review team but should share meaningful data, policies, and other records that are useful to staff and parents in forming the program and helping it to move forward.

Suggestions for Increasing the Effectiveness of the Instructional Program

Suggestions for increased effectiveness are framed by the review team as they compare what they have learned about the program and its impact on students to the quality standards in the review criteria.

During this phase of the review, it is important that the team keep in mind that individual schools institute and support change in various ways. The design of an appropriate change or improvement process is critical to the success of the suggested effectiveness strategies. The reviewers and key planners will select which suggestions should be developed into assistance plans with the goal of immediate implementation and determine which suggestions should be reserved for future implementation. Next, team and key school planners develop plans for improvement for the selected suggestions, including proposed activities, strategies for implementation, need for resources, and so on. Finally, all suggestions are woven together in the report of findings as a working document to be used by the school to guide further improvement efforts.

In developing assistance plans reviewers and school program planners identify activities that would:

- Eliminate or ameliorate conditions interfering with the implementation of high-quality curriculum and instruction
- Have the greatest impact on the program, leading to improved effectiveness in many areas
- Be the best next step to take in an area ready for improvement--where staff interest and motivation are high, where there can be high yield for efforts expended, and where the scope is appropriate to ensure success

The design for providing assistance should link the resources the school needs for change with the services available so that there is maximum support for improvement efforts. The identification of supportive resources should spiral outward from the school itself and include district, county, regional, and state services. The assistance design grows out of the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program and includes the school's procedures for planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Program Review Procedures

This section describes the steps to carry out a program review. It is divided into three sections: making the arrangements, preparing for program review, and conducting the program review.

Making the Arrangements

Scheduling, mailing of materials, and establishing liaison between reviewers and the school district take place at the local level. Most districts will be affiliated with other districts with which they share personnel to provide a pool of trained independent persons required for review teams. Most offices of county superintendents of schools provide coordination services to assist districts in the formation of a consortium or other types of affiliation. Although there will be a variety of such arrangements, for the sake of simplicity in explanation, this section will assume the existence of a consortium of districts and the existence of a person designated to coordinate program review activities in the consortium. The reader should make appropriate analogies to the circumstances of the particular district being reviewed.

The lead reviewer's involvement with the review of a particular school is initiated by the consortium's program review coordinator. The coordinator will orient the lead reviewer to the procedures being used in the consortium; to materials and in-service training the school staff has received; and to responsibilities for contacting district and school personnel.

Contacting the school. Consistent with consortium's procedures, the lead reviewer will telephone the school principal to set up the review. This call, usually a month before the review, should cover the following topics:

- Confirmation of schedule of events--times and dates of visits to the school by the lead and the full team
- Information the school should send to the reviewers ahead of time
- Information the school will receive ahead of time and how to get it
- Proposal of an agenda for the "review preparation meeting" by the reviewers, the principal, and key school planners

- Curricular areas selected by the school on which the review will focus

- Procedures used by the school in preparing for the review, including a mandatory self-study

- Procedures used by the team before, during, and after the review

- Clarification of any concerns or questions

Meeting of the review team. Prior to the review, the lead reviewer should contact other team members to conclude all arrangements of time, place, and materials. The lead reviewer should discuss with each team member his or her background and experience with program review. Expectations for review preparation (see next section) should be clarified and the overall schedule of events and review strategies determined. Finally, the plans and expectations for the review preparation meeting with school planners should be discussed.

Preparing for Program Review

A successful program review depends upon thorough preparation on the part of the review team. In addition to completing the necessary arrangements, the team will read, study, and discuss a variety of materials prior to the initial meeting with the school principal and school planners. Some of these materials will be obtained through the consortium coordinator, while others will be obtained directly from the school. The basic set of materials includes:

- Elementary Program Review Training Manual, 1985-86, including the Handbook for Conducting an Elementary Program Review

- State Department of Education K-8 curriculum guides, frameworks, and handbooks in the curriculum areas selected as focus of the review

- Curriculum assessment results, goals statements, expectation statements, books in use, reading lists, others as determined by the school and the district

- School plan

- School data summary: demographic trends over time, student achievement patterns over time, attendance and other climate patterns over time, program evaluation reports, district and school policies related to curriculum, instruction, staff development, and school planning

- Logistic information: maps, schedules, staff roster, and so on

Study the curriculum materials. The curriculum materials prepared by the State Department of Education include state K-8 curriculum guides and curriculum frameworks and handbooks. These materials will be reviewed by the team. The purpose of this review is to ground the review team in what state and national curriculum leaders believe makes a quality program in their area and to provide the background standards which will frame the discussions between the review team and the school planners on curriculum issues. In addition, the review of the curriculum materials will help the team in the analysis and assessment of the school's curriculum and in the formulation of suggestions likely to have good results for the school.

The curriculum materials sent to the reviewers by the school--such as the goals and expectations, the school's curriculum assessment, the books in

use in the classroom, required and elective reading lists, and so forth--should provide a sense of the curriculum offered by the school. It is important for the team members to be able to demonstrate a basic understanding of the curriculum offered when they first meet with school planners.

The reviewers will analyze how the curriculum offered by the school compares to the standards of the quality criteria and the expectations conveyed by the guides and handbooks in the curriculum materials prepared by the Department of Education. Curricular issues to be discussed at the review preparation meeting with the school planners should be identified and framed for discussion.

In preparing for the discussion on curriculum, reviewers should ask the following questions:

- What is the balance of subjects taught every student?
- Are there major gaps in the curriculum?
- What kind of balance is there between skills development and content in each curricular area?
- What books are the students reading?
- How are writing and oral presentation incorporated in each curricular area?
- How are the skills of interpretation, inference, critical thinking, problem solving, evaluation, and other higher order skills incorporated into all curricular areas?

Evaluating the materials with respect to these questions will help identify the curricular issues to discuss at the review preparation meeting. The discussion will help resolve some of the issues and provide an indication of strengths and weaknesses to be confirmed by observation and interview.

Study the School Data Summary. The information in the school data summary provides a picture of trends in student achievement, trends in student enrollment, and trends in school climate. This picture, along with local evaluation reports, places the review in a time context and helps the reviewers understand what they will be learning while at the school. In addition, reviewers will learn something of what the district and school philosophy is and what leadership priorities and practices are by reading policy documents requested from the school.

Read the school plan. A careful review of the school plan (including the school budget), especially those curricular areas selected for in-depth review, helps the reviewers understand what the school priorities are, what the planned program is to accomplish, and how.

Conducting the Program Review

Review preparation meeting with school planners. The review preparation meeting should take place sometime before the first day of the review. The purpose of this meeting is to establish a common understanding among reviewers, the principal, and the key school planners of what to expect during the review. The meeting is chaired by the lead reviewer. The lead reviewer and the principal should discuss in advance the purpose, roles, and process of the meeting. The agenda should include the following items:

- School background: The principal briefs the team on the historical and social context of the school. Recent events which have had a significant impact on school life are described.

- Program review background: The lead reviewer briefs the school people on the history and purpose of program review. The basic review methodology is explained and the roles of the team members are clarified.

- Curriculum discussion: This is the most substantial item on the agenda and usually requires the most time. The discussion should move through three steps:

  - Highlights of the content of the curricular documents, both the local materials and the criteria provided by the State Department of Education

  - Discussion of issues identified by the review team

  - Establishment of expectations for the curriculum focus and strategy of the review

If the local point of view in the curriculum conflicts with that in the quality criteria, this conflict should be discussed. From this discussion should come a shared understanding of how curricular conflict will be managed during the review. Because the criteria were developed with the help of major state and national curriculum organizations, representatives of local districts, and eminent scholars, conflicts should be rare. Items to be discussed include:

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- Self-study. Procedures and results of school self-study are presented and discussed.

- School plan. The school plan is discussed in order to determine how agreements about curricular instructional methodologies, school goals, and other issues were developed and are expected to be implemented.

- School data summary. School planners and the review team discuss their interpretation of the data and information in the data summary, including past trends and future aspirations. The diagnostic value of the data is discussed with respect to review focus and strategies.

- Agreement on review strategy and focus. Next, agreement is reached on the basic strategic orientation the team will take, including areas of focus where a more in-depth look is most likely to be productive.

- Schedule of events: Final scheduling and logistics planning is worked out.

Introductory meeting with the school staff. Arrangements should be made for a short, informal meeting of the school staff and the reviewers prior to the beginning of classes on the first morning of review. During this meeting, the reviewers will:

- Share the purpose of the review:

  - Compare the school program to the standards of the quality criteria to determine effectiveness of the instructional program.

  - Recognize program strengths.

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- Make suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program.

- Alert staff members to the procedures that will be followed:

  - Observation in each classroom, including informal discussions with students and staff members and review of students' work

  - Group interviews with teachers, aides, support staff, councils/committees, parents, district office staff, as appropriate

  - Review of curriculum materials, student achievement and other outcome data, schoolwide policies and procedures, and the school plan

  - "Report of Findings and Suggestions"

Classroom visits. The reviewers work with the school staff to assure that all classrooms are visited and that resource specialist rooms, learning laboratories, media centers, and other areas where regular and special learning activities occur are included when appropriate.

Group interviews. The purpose of group interviews is to discuss with similar job groups (e.g., all teachers) the key issues of curriculum, instruction, staff development, and school improvement processes. The review team should base the interview questions on what has been learned so far. The interview should provide evidence for verifying or modifying the team's preliminary views, and extend its knowledge of the situation at the school. Group interviews generally are scheduled for 30 to 45 minutes; however, the teachers' interview should be an hour or more.

Ongoing discussion with the principal and key school planners. During the review, several times will be set aside for informal and/or formal discussions with the school principal and key planners. These meetings serve to keep everyone abreast of:

- How the review is proceeding

- Areas in which information is incomplete or missing

- Scheduling problems

- Feedback on what has been learned about the program so far

In addition, the meetings provide an opportunity for the team to receive feedback about how the review is being perceived by the school community and to receive additional information.

Ongoing meetings of the review team. Throughout the review, the reviewers must meet frequently to ensure consistency in their perceptions of the program, the process of review, and their concepts of areas for improvement.

The times that have been found to be most productive for meetings of reviewers are:

- Following the first few classroom visits--to establish commonality of observation

- Preceding group interviews--to determine questions to be explored and issues to be raised

- At the end of each day of the review--to discuss quality findings and suggestions for those aspects of the program needing no further clarification, and to design strategies for collecting additional information and/or resolving conflicts in information

- Preceding the preliminary report to the principal and school planners at which time quality judgments and suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program are prepared and the roles determined for the report to be made to the principal and school planners. By the end of this meeting, suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the program should be framed, based on what has been learned about the school.

Development of Report of Findings with principal and key school planners. Early on the last day of the review, after all observations and interviews have been completed, the review team will meet with the principal and the same group of key school planners who attended the review preparation meeting. This meeting has four objectives:

- To report findings and general suggestions

- To select which of the suggestions will be developed into assistance plans and which will be stated for future implementation

- To complete, in a collaborative effort, the development of the selected suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program (This is done by elaborating the general suggestions prepared by the review team with concrete details specific to the school and its planning and implementation processes.)

- To plan the best way of presenting findings to the entire staff

"Report of Findings and Suggestions." This report is presented in an open meeting involving the entire staff and other interested persons in the school community. Chapter III of this handbook explains this report in more detail.

CHAPTER II: APPLYING THE QUALITY CRITERIA

This chapter describes the quality criteria and contains general directions and cautions to reviewers for applying the criteria. The criteria are found in Appendix A.

Common Themes of the Quality Criteria

The quality criteria are of two kinds--those that address specific curricula areas and those that address schoolwide program elements. Reviewers will note that while each criterion focuses on a specific part of the program, there are common themes that thread through each of the sets of criteria. In applying the curricular criteria, reviewers will observe instruction, review student work, and talk to students and instructional staff members to determine for each curricular area being reviewed:

- What constitutes the curriculum, including:
  - What is to be learned (as documented by the written goals and objectives of the curriculum)
  - What is being taught
  - What students are learning
- The extent to which lessons and assignments, including instructional strategies, material, media, equipment, and so forth, are appropriate to:
  - The curriculum to be learned
  - The needs of the students
- The extent to which lessons and assignments:
  - Extend beyond rote learning to application of what is being learned
  - Employ the fundamental basic skills in acquiring curricular knowledge
  - Challenge students to think and communicate their thoughts
  - Enable students with special needs to succeed in the regular curriculum

In applying the schoolwide criteria, reviewers will be talking to staff members, observing them at work, observing the interactions among staff members and students, and observing the operations of the school program to determine schoolwide effects on learning; that is:

- The extent to which the culture of the school revolves around the joy and importance of learning
- The degree of alignment of the allocation of human and material resources, including staff development efforts, with curricular and instructional goals

- The extent to which the school is actively engaged with the parents and the wider school community in common support of school and community goals

- The presence of a living improvement process rooted in the learning culture which is cultivated by management practices and supported by policies and resources

Cautions About Applying the Quality Criteria

No matter how well designed the procedure or how well prepared the reviewer, there will always be difficulties judging program quality. Reviewers should be aware of these difficulties and the potential consequences of each.

Overgeneralizing. Necessarily, the review is limited to a sample of situations for a given point in time, curriculum content, students, and so on. Merely assuming that this limited sample is typical is a mistake of overgeneralization. To avoid overgeneralization, the initial impressions from observed samples must be supported by relating what students are doing to the work they are producing. This current work is then related to samples of past work from the last several weeks. The observed activities and students' work are discussed with the teacher, and explanations of how the activities fit in with the overall program for the year are asked for. The teacher's explanation is an important step in generalizing. Finally, observations in the various classrooms should be related to schoolwide programs and plans for programs. Reviewers should discuss this relationship with the teacher, with people active in planning, and with school leaders, especially the principal. By fitting observation and explanation together in this way, it is possible to construct a historical picture of the school program and tie it to the observed experiences of students. It is this picture and the tie to students which provide the framework for generalizing from specific observed data.

Considering all students. In judging the extent to which each aspect of the program matches the standards of the quality criteria, reviewers must consider all students. When virtually all students receive curriculum and instruction as described in the quality criterion, that aspect of the program is recognized as high quality. If, however, a specific set of students was receiving curriculum and instruction of quality less than that described in the criterion, the review team would frame a suggestion for improving the quality of program received by those students.

Too impressionistic. While initial impressions are a valuable guide for pursuing a line of investigation, they should be validated or rejected by careful examination of appropriate evidence. This evidence should include teachers' explanations, students' work, or classroom observation. Initial impressions can be based upon situations which are not typical of the school. Reviewers are cautioned not to let these impressions color the review without verifying them.

Too analytic. The reviewer should not just set upon the school as an active information gatherer, ferreting and figuring the whole time. This can lead to collecting data simply for the sake of collection rather than looking for the qualitative effect on the program. Reviewers should give the school an opportunity to disclose itself in its own way. Reviewers should, therefore, spend

some time quietly allowing the atmosphere and tempo at that school to present itself.

Personal bias for or against specific materials or programs. Use the criteria and procedures in this manual. Reviewers should keep in mind that what would not work in one situation may work in another. Reviewers must be certain to observe how a program works for the school, rather than judging how it would or did work for them. Just because a program was best for a reviewer at his or her school does not mean that it should be judged as effective in another school.

False positive. This costly mistake occurs when a school staff is doing a poor or mediocre job, and the reviewer tells them they are doing a very good job. When this mistake is made, the incentives for improvement are undermined and the arguments for maintaining the status quo are reinforced by the review.

False negative. Although this mistake can be most upsetting, it is not always as bad as the false positive. Schools which are found to be effective but not up to the quality criteria are often upset that they did not receive a top finding (just as students used to getting A's complain the most over B+ grades). In many cases, these schools are strong and confident enough in their self-study to brush off the effect of a false negative. In some cases, however, especially in schools which have made progress in developing more effective programs, a false negative rating can be demoralizing.

Reinforcing facades. An error is reflected by the collapse of the review process--which is intended to have a real and positive effect on the education of students--into a game. While concern for fairness is very important, it is less important than concern for the real job of educating students. Overattention to the technology and procedures of program reviews may subvert the intended effects on education and create a "fair" but expensive and wasteful game. Some school and district personnel complain that trying to do well on program review forces them to waste time building facades instead of teaching the students. Reviewers should not reinforce facade building in schools which want to do well. Reviewers should concentrate on students' learning rather than paraphernalia of instruction.

CHAPTER III: THE REPORT OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

This chapter includes a description of the development and presentation of the "Report of Findings and Suggestions" for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program. While parts of this chapter will be useful to schools conducting self-study, the chapter is intended primarily for reviewers and school planners who are presenting the findings of an external review and the resulting assistance plans to the school community.

What the "Report of Findings and Suggestions" Includes

The report is both a written and oral presentation delivered at the conclusion of a program review. It grows out of a discussion of review findings between the review team and the principal and key school planners. It is the means through which the diagnostic portion of the review is linked to assistance resources within the school, district, county, and region, and is then communicated to the school community. It is the most critical element of the entire review process.

The report communicates the three major elements of the review:

- The result of the diagnostic review of the school's curriculum and instructional program and how it affects the students
- The assistance plan for improving the effectiveness of the planned program, including the resources available for supporting the assistance plan
- The review process as a model for collecting and analyzing information about the planned program in a way that results in improvements in the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional methodologies

These elements are woven together to provide information to the school as to how the effectiveness of the program can be sustained and/or increased.

A successful "Report of Findings and Suggestions" is a stimulus for continuing program improvement. It not only confirms and extends the knowledge that staff and parents have about their program, but also assists the school in gathering and organizing resources supportive of the school's plan for improvement.

The information the review team has gathered at the site, its best judgments about the quality of the curriculum and instruction, and the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program are communicated in two phases:

- During the development of the "Report of Findings and Suggestions" with the principal and key school planners, the team recounts its findings, plans the best way to present these findings to the staff, and collaborates on the development of selected suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the program into assistance plans.
- The "Report of Findings and Suggestions," offered at an open meeting of the entire staff,

district representative, council, parents, and community members, communicates the results of the diagnosis of the school's curriculum and instructional program, recognition of areas of program strength, suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program, and assistance plans that address selected suggestions for increasing school effectiveness in a way that encourages efforts to continue program improvement.

This two-phase reporting sequence helps determine that:

- The diagnosis of program quality will be presented in such a way as to encourage improvement efforts at the school.
- The suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program are appropriate and are likely to yield positive results.
- The assistance plans will be complete and fully understood by staff and reviewers.
- School planners will become actively involved in the review and improvement procedures so that they may use similar methods when other curricular areas are to be reviewed within the school's own self-study process.

How the Report Is Developed

Preparation for the "Report of Findings and Suggestions" is concurrent with the process of the program review since the report is based on all the information the team and school planners have gathered through the investigatory methods of observation, interview, and review of documents. Information is analyzed, verified, synthesized, evaluated, and reported via the Quality Criteria.

Conferences of the review team members, held throughout the review, form a basis for the report. A picture of the school emerges from these conferences as reviewers:

- Identify areas that require more information and plan strategies to collect it through observation, interview, and discussions with the key school planners.
- Review the school plan and all documented information gathered during the visit.
- Compare information collected with the key ideas in the quality criteria.
- Identify potential areas for suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program, recognizing the school's own improvement process.
- Identify the local and regional assistance resources by curricular areas so that suggestions may be coupled with the assistance plans.
- Decide on the order of the preliminary report to the principal and key school planners, how the discussion is to be guided and by whom, and the responsibility each reviewer will take.

The Development of the Report of Findings

During the development of the report with the principal and key school planners, the review team presents what it found when the members compared what they had learned about the program and its impact on the students with the Quality Criteria.

Questions about these findings will be answered, information verified, and the diagnostic portion--the information the team has collected that seems to identify what is preventing a high quality program--of the "Report of Findings and Suggestions" will be framed. The cooperation and collaboration of the principal and key school planners are essential in providing suggestions that are meaningful and are likely to produce results, and providing a bridge between the review team and the rest of the school community so that perceptions are viewed as valid.

It is important for all involved to recognize that the development of the Report of Findings is a working meeting. After the major findings of review are shared and discussed and the team's recognition of program strengths and suggestions for increasing effectiveness are presented, the main task of the meeting can be addressed--determining which suggestions will be fully developed into assistance plans and which will remain suggestions. In a mutual effort the team, principal, and key planners will build the selected suggestions into assistance plans. The completed assistance plans include proposed activities, strategies for implementation, resources needed, and ongoing planning and evaluation activities. Finally, these suggestions and agreed-upon assistance plans are woven into the "Report of Findings and Suggestions" as a working document to be used by the school to guide further improvement efforts.

The lead reviewer must conduct the developmental meeting in a way which elicits involvement from school staff. Many schools will be knowledgeable about program review practices and procedures and will be ready to take an active collaborative role in the process. At other schools, the key planners will want the team to assume the majority

of the responsibility for reporting to the school and framing the assistance plans. It is the responsibility of the lead reviewer and the team members to assess the readiness of the school planners to participate in the "Report of Findings and Suggestions" and to plan activities in accordance with the abilities of the staff.

The "Report of Findings and Suggestions" for Increasing the Effectiveness of the Instructional Program

Following the developmental meeting with the principal and key planners and the joint development of selected suggestions into assistance plans, the "Report of Findings and Suggestions" is presented to the remainder of the school staff, parents, and district office and community members. This report may be presented by the team, the school planners, or a combination of both groups. The purpose of this report is to:

- Present the findings of the review to the school community.
- Provide the supporting evidence that contributed to the diagnosis of the program.
- Present the suggestions for improving program effectiveness. Expand on the written statements by sharing the ideas and recommendations of the team and school planners on how the school staff and parents can use the planning/evaluation process for continued program improvement.
- Describe the assistance plan and resources that support the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program.

A professional, clear presentation that effectively recounts the diagnosis of the planned program; reports the findings of the quality review; recognizes the strengths of the program; and frames the school's improvement efforts through appropriate suggestions for increasing effectiveness will be the final and lasting impression at the school. Questions following the presentation are encouraged to clarify or expand points made in the report although the bulk of discussion should take place during the development of the report with the principal and school planners.

In presenting the report, the review team and participating school staff members will:

- Emphasize that the review is of the whole planned program, not of individual classrooms or particular parts of the program.
- Explain how the Quality Criteria are used and how they relate to each other.
- Recognize the effort expended by staff and others in implementing the program and/or their effort in improving their program.
- Present the findings, recognizing program strengths and sharing suggestions for increasing program effectiveness and the assistance plans developed collaboratively by the team and key planners.
- Open the report to questions and planners' clarifications.
- Thank the school community for its hospitality.

In addition to the oral report of findings, the team will leave the following written report:

- Statements recognizing program strengths or high-quality aspects of the school program, as appropriate
- The suggestions for increasing program effectiveness, including those developed into assistance and resource plans by the review team members and key school planners

Follow-Up to a Program Review

The "Report of Findings and Suggestions" is a significant portion of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the school program for the purpose of modifying the school-level plan.

In School Improvement schools, the School Site Council (SSC) should take an active part in monitoring the follow-up activities that will grow out of the formal program review process and the Report of Findings.

In all schools the key planners should take an active leadership role in the implementation of the suggestions as well as the assistance plans.

Program reviews are monitored by the State Department of Education and the results are used to provide assistance to schools, districts, offices of the county superintendent of schools, and regional resources. For follow-up assistance in implementing the suggestions for program improvement, the school personnel should follow their assistance plans in contacting their district resources, their office of

the county superintendent of schools, the State Department of Education, private or public institutions, staff development centers within their areas, or whatever they decide would be best for them. While external agencies should be aware that schools which have experienced an analysis of the effectiveness of their instructional program, whether internal or external, are most receptive to program improvement suggestions, the decisions about who should help in implementing recommendations or modifying the planned program rest with the school and the district staff.

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APPENDIX A: THE QUALITY CRITERIA FOR JUDGING THE EFFECT OF THE PROGRAM ON THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT

The reading criterion focuses on the effect of the reading program on students. It deals with completeness of content, identification of skills and concepts to be learned, range and depth of content to be learned, and aspects of instructional methodology that are unique to reading. In applying this criterion, consider all students participating in all programs offered by the school.

All students are learning to read with understanding, think critically about what they read, and enjoy and respond actively to important literary works. Within the framework of reading for meaning, the focus for reading progresses in stages from skill acquisition to fluency and finally to reading to learn. Students learn to read in the early grades, steadily increase their fluency through the middle grades, and use their reading in the upper grades as a primary vehicle for learning. Students at all grade levels respond with ideas and opinions which go beyond what is explicit in the text as well as comprehend literal meaning. Further, they investigate, evaluate, and integrate information and ideas of increasing complexity and apply their reading experiences to new contexts. Students use reading to gain knowledge in literature, mathematics, science, social science, and fine arts.

Literature is a major part of the reading program. Students regularly read and are read important literature, both from required and recommended lists. They discuss what the literature means in both personal and cultural contexts. Frequent discussion and writing address the moral and social issues articulated in the literature. Teachers use literature to extend the students' experiences and to explore common values. Practicing authors are brought into the school to work with students.

Students learn to enter and explore the wide world of human experience accessible through reading; they regularly acquire new information and perspective through reading a variety of materials, including literary works, textbooks, newspapers, trade books, and encyclopedias. They read about familiar and interesting topics and relate new information to what they already know about the topic. Through discussion and writing, students interact with the teacher and one another about what they are reading. The use of workbooks is kept to a minimum. Students have easy access to a variety of books and periodicals in the classroom and have regularly scheduled periods for self-selected reading during class time. The resources that supplement the regular reading program, including the library, enhance and extend classroom instruction.

Teachers, the principal, and other adults at the school express enthusiasm for reading. Teachers and students view reading and writing as purposeful human communication which is essential, desirable, pleasurable, and attainable. All students, including the less able and those who have limited proficiency in the English language, are enthusiastic about the reading program. Teaching strategies and materials are adjusted to accommodate special needs and encourage participation for all students.

- Beginning reading provides for continuous and systematic development of skills within the framework of reading for meaning.
- The focus of the reading curriculum shifts progressively from skills development to reading for fluency and to reading to learn.
- Reading for meaning is emphasized; students develop skills in the four levels of comprehension:
  - Literal: grouping information explicitly stated in the text
  - Interpretive: formulating ideas or opinions that are based upon the text read but not explicitly stated
  - Applicative: connecting or integrating new information, ideas, concepts, values, and feelings with previous experience and knowledge
  - Critical: synthesizing, analyzing, or evaluating the material read

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- Students read major literature as an integral part of their regular reading program.
  - Literature selections include poetry, drama, biography, fiction, and nonfiction.
  - Students explore the concepts of a common heritage as transmitted through the use of high quality literature.
  - Students discuss and write about the ideas contained in literature.
  - Students are guided in their reading by a list of suggested titles.
  - Practicing authors work with students who are learning to write poetry, stories, and other literary forms.
- New vocabulary is regularly introduced in the reading program, and students are familiar with the origin and history of words.

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- Students read a wide variety of materials to develop reading skills, increase reading fluency, and gain new information. Reading materials include:

  - Textbooks
  - Newspapers
  - Trade books
  - Encyclopedias
  - Short stories and novels
  - Poetry and plays
  - Biographies and nonfiction books about our social, physical, and moral worlds

- Students discuss what they are reading with the teacher and with one another. They frequently write about what they are reading, and workbook usage for comprehension development is kept to a minimum.

- Methods for motivating students are employed regularly by the teaching staff and include:

  - Reading assignments about topics which spark interest and natural curiosity
  - Use of reading to learn about our social, physical, and moral worlds
  - Self-selected reading materials
  - Appropriate modeling from adults at the school
  - Opportunities for students to hear stories that are read aloud

- Students with special needs participate in a reading program that is conducted in concert with the regular reading program. Special reading services supplement and do not occur in lieu of the regular reading program. To the extent possible, students with special needs should read the same material and discuss the same ideas and concepts as other students.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

The written language criterion focuses on the effect of the written language program on students. It is built on the belief that writing is an effective tool for communication and should be part of the instructional program at all grade levels. The criterion also focuses on the completeness of content, identification of skills and concepts to be learned, range and depth of content, and appropriate instructional methodology accompanying the written language curriculum. In applying this criterion, consider all students in all programs offered by the school.

Writing is valued as an effective tool for communication and is reinforced at all grade levels. The standards and expectations for written language are clearly defined and implemented at all grade levels. Students at all skill levels, including those with limited-English proficiency, are involved daily in writing activities which focus on effective communication. Students' writing fluency is developed through practice in writing for a variety of purposes and audiences and on a range of topics in a variety of forms. Students learn and practice all the stages or steps of writing: prewriting, writing, responding, revising, editing, developing skills with the conventions of writing, evaluating, and post-writing. Students understand and apply the conventions of writing, including grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, paragraphing, and format to the assignments they complete. Students receive ongoing feedback on their writing, and their own work is used to reinforce the conventions. The writing activities in which the students are engaged help them organize and clarify their thinking and generate and express thoughts logically and clearly. Students use writing in a meaningful way with evident purpose in all areas of the curriculum. Techniques and approaches for teaching writing are varied to match student needs. Writing skills are reinforced, applied, and extended by inclusion in other curricular areas.

- There are written standards and expectations for student writing which are known and used by all teachers. Students write every day.
- K-1 students participate in activities which facilitate the transition from communicating through speaking to communicating through writing:
  - Students talk about experiences and their responses are recorded in writing for their later use.
  - Students illustrate what has been written through their art activities.
  - Student illustrations, along with written words, are displayed.
  - Students learn the written symbol system as well as the basic conventions of the English language.
- Students use writing skills in their daily work. Teachers respond to what is communicated as well as to the quality of the writing in all content areas.
- Students experience all of the following stages or steps in the writing process:

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  - Prewriting activities, such as storytelling or dramatic activities by teachers and students, brainstorming, clustering words and ideas, discussing issues and ideas, reading literature, and interviewing
  - Writing activities, such as writing for a variety of purposes and audiences; about a variety of topics related to readings (e.g., book reports), experiences (letters), observations (nature studies), and ideas (essays); and in a variety of forms such as stories, poems, drama, and expository compositions
  - Responding activities, such as whole-class and small-group response sessions, using reproduced copies of students' work; written responses to each other's writing; comparison of different versions of the same piece of writing; and consultation with individual students regarding their writing
  - Revising activities, such as adding detail, deleting repetition; clarifying voice, point of view, and audience; substituting and arranging; and using comments of peers and teachers
  - Editing activities, such as using an editing checklist; editing the works of peers and other individuals; using references or handbooks on usage, grammar, and other conventions of writing; and conferring with teachers

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- Activities that develop skill with the conventions of writing, such as prewriting exercises that generate vocabulary; direct teaching of the conventions as the need becomes evident in the student's writing; editing with the use of spelling and punctuation checks; exercises that make effective use of grammar and usage handbooks; practicing sentence-combining activities to illustrate sentence construction, variety, and ways of achieving economy of expression; and analysis of students' writing skills

- Evaluation activities, such as evaluating student writing only after a final draft has been prepared, instructing students on how to evaluate their own writing and that of their peers, and classwide evaluating sample papers in class

- Post-writing activities, such as displaying student writing on a bulletin board or in the community, publishing student writing in a school or community newspaper or in a classroom collection, exchanging student writing between classes or schools, and recognizing superior student writing through contests, awards, and announcements during assemblies

- All students, including those with limited proficiency in English, are experiencing a writing program in each major area of the curriculum, learning the unique writing requirements of each. Techniques and approaches are varied as appropriate to individual student needs.

- Writing achievement is assessed regularly on a schoolwide basis. These assessments include holistic and analytic measures of student writing samples. Parents are kept informed of student progress in writing.

The oral language criterion focuses on the effect of the oral language program on students. Completeness of content, identification of skills and concepts to be learned, the range and depth of the content, and the instructional methodology appropriate to oral language are considered. When applying this criterion, consider all students in all programs offered by the school.

The oral language curriculum is clearly defined and is implemented throughout each grade level on a regular basis. Students are learning and applying listening and speaking skills in a range of situations and communication forms, for various purposes and audiences, and in a variety of speaking styles. Students are applying critical listening skills; are effectively communicating feelings, experiences, knowledge, and ideas with fluency and clarity; and are increasing their reasoning ability. All students are involved in activities designed to increase their confidence and skills in public speaking. The oral language activities at all grade levels build on the students' own academic, personal, and social experiences.

Teachers and other adults model correct and effective listening and speaking skills. Teachers support and reinforce students' listening and speaking skills by promoting conversation, discussion, presentations, and critical listening. Assessment of the students' speaking and listening skills is ongoing and is used as a basis for planning of instruction.

Students with special language needs, including limited-English-proficient students, speakers of nonstandard English, and exceptionally shy students, learn English through oral language activities designed to address their specific needs. They continue to increase their oral skills as they apply them to the learning of subject area content. The dialects or primary languages of speakers of nonstandard English and other languages are treated with respect by the staff members and other students as they learn to master standard English.

- Students learn and apply listening and speaking skills in a variety of contexts:
  - Situations--informal, formal, and interpersonal
  - Purposes--informing, learning, persuading, evaluating messages, facilitating social interaction, sharing feelings, and using imaginative, creative expression
  - Audiences--classmates, teachers, peers, family, and community
  - Communication forms--conversation, group discussion, interview, drama, public speaking, and oral interpretation
  - Speaking styles
- Students receive systematic instruction in oral language which promotes language creation, comprehension, and utilization. Instructional activities appropriate to the developmental needs and abilities of the students address:
  - Diction
  - Fluency
  - Intonation
  - Vocabulary
  - Syntax
  - Organization
- Students regularly participate in activities to develop their oral language skills, such as:
  - Presenting oral material through reports, drama, and speeches
  - Debating issues
  - Holding discussions on specific topics
  - Sharing ideas, experiences, and feelings
- Students participate in activities which build confidence in speaking such as:
  - Choral reading
  - Readers' theater
  - Dramatic activities
  - Storytelling
- Teachers and other adults model correct and effective listening and speaking skills; support and reinforce students' oral language skills by promoting conversation, discussions, and storytelling; and consistently reward students for using correct oral language.
- Teachers assess the students' oral communication skills throughout the year, giving regular feedback. A variety of assessment methods is used, including teachers' continuous monitoring, discussion of the results of standardized and criterion-referenced tests, interpretation of audience-based rating scales, and use of self-evaluation instruments.
- Students with special language needs, including limited-English-proficient students, students who speak nonstandard English, and exceptionally shy students, learn and develop English through oral language activities. They continue to increase their oral skills as they apply them to the learning of subject area content.

The mathematics criterion focuses on the effect of the mathematics program on the students. It deals with the completeness of the curriculum, the development of essential understandings and problem-solving ability, and the instructional setting for the study of mathematics. In applying this criterion, consider all students participating in all programs offered by the school.

The mathematics curriculum engages students' curiosity and sense of inquiry in well-defined content that includes all strands at all grade levels. Essential understandings are distinguished from those that provide greater depth and breadth, and all boys and girls develop these understandings. Students master the single-digit number facts and, with appropriate use of the calculator, are comfortable with and proficient in numerical computations; they routinely estimate before any calculation and use the most appropriate computational method and tool for each calculation. Lessons and assignments are structured to emphasize student understanding and ability to use mathematics. Students understand the structure and logic of mathematics and use the language of mathematics.

Problem solving is a major part of the mathematics program. Students are regularly involved in formulating problems and in choosing approaches and strategies for solving the problems. All students are taught and understand how to work through the stages of problem solving. They are encouraged to be inventive, guess, and estimate. Their natural fascination with how puzzling problems are solved is encouraged and used to motivate discussions of strategies and tactics. They are frequently asked to explain what they are doing and why and to judge the reasonableness of the answers they generate. Students are challenged with both the real world and abstract problems, including complex situations that require the use of higher-level thinking skills.

Concepts and skills from all strands are interwoven, reinforced, and extended through lessons and assignments so that students experience mathematics as a cumulative subject. New concepts are studied first in terms of students' concrete experiences; manipulatives and other concrete materials are used to enable students to gain direct experience with the underlying principle of each concept. Lessons incorporate and build on skills and concepts previously learned. The instructional setting is varied and provides students with the opportunity for individual work, small-group, cooperative learning activities, and whole-class participation. Student grouping is based on ongoing assessment of student need.

Supplementary services are coordinated with the regular mathematics program to focus on fundamentals as they are presented in the regular program and do not rely on repeating low-level skills from earlier grades. Mathematics is interdisciplinary; students use their mathematical skills in other subject areas in a variety of situations.

- Instruction covers the strands of number, measurement, geometry, patterns and functions, statistics and probability, logic, and algebra in all grade levels.
- Curriculum and instruction focus on students' understanding of fundamental concepts rather than their ability to memorize algorithms or computational procedures.
- Essential understandings are distinguished from those that provide greater depth and breadth.
  - Teachers are clear on the essential understandings and on how the learning of specific concepts and skills depends on these understandings.
  - Instruction is organized to ensure that every student acquires these understandings.
- Patterns and functions, statistics and probability, and geometry are taught each year, with the subject matter gradually increasing in complexity.
- Instruction emphasizes understanding and use of mathematical concepts and promotes the use of the language of mathematics.
- Students add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers, decimals, and fractions with facility and accuracy.
  - Students use estimation to aid in selecting a method for exact calculation and to establish the reasonableness of results.
  - Students use mental arithmetic for all single-digit operations and for simple manipulations such as doubling, halving, and multiplying or dividing by powers of ten.

- Students use the calculator correctly and confidently when mental calculation would be difficult or when pencil-and-paper calculation would be inefficient.

- Students use computer programs, as appropriate, to perform extensive or repetitive calculations, to simulate real situations, and to perform experiments that aid in the understanding of mathematical concepts.

- All students are taught and understand how to work through each stage of problem solving, including problem exploration, formulation, strategy development, solution activity, and interpretation of results. Lessons and assignments are designed to include:

  - Working through the stages over time
  - Formulating several problems from a given description of a situation
  - Representing the same information in different ways, e.g., verbal, graphic, and symbolic
  - Working with more or less information than necessary

- Problem-solving approaches are demonstrated and discussed. Multiple-solution methods are emphasized.

- In working with more complex situations, students:

  - Formulate and model problems.
  - Screen relevant from irrelevant information.
  - Organize information.
  - Make conjectures and test their validity.
  - Analyze patterns and relationships.
  - Use inductive and deductive processes.
  - Identify or evaluate alternative mathematical approaches.
  - Find and test solutions.
  - Interpret results.

- Lessons often begin with imaginative situations likely to engage students' curiosity.

  - Students apply previously learned skills to situations they have not seen before.

  - Students relate concepts to natural situations in and out of school.

- Lessons and assignments interweave the strands and appropriate concepts and skills from previous lessons; new or extended concepts are connected to what students already know.

- Students at all grade levels experience concrete repesentations of new concepts as a foundation for symbolic representations. There is a smooth transition from concrete to abstract.

- Students work in groupings suitable to the content and matched to student needs and strengths; for example: whole-class discussion/exploration, small groups engaged in problem solving, individual work, peer tutoring pairs.

- All students are assessed at the beginning of the school year and regularly throughout the year. Teachers use the results of student assessment to determine the need for reteaching and further practice.

- Teachers introduce, model, and provide guided practice for new concepts before students proceed on their own. Homework includes independent practice of concepts that have been mastered in class. There is daily review of homework concepts.

- Students receiving remedial instruction cover all the core fundamentals of the mathematics program. Remedial work is keyed to regular classroom instruction.

- Computers are a major tool of education. Their value in creating geometric displays, organizing and graphing data, simulating real-life situations, and generating numerical sequences and patterns is recognized. Students are developing their abilities to interact with computer programs in highly individualized ways to explore and experiment with mathematical concepts.

The science criterion focuses on the effect of the science program on the students. It deals with the completeness of the science program, identification of the skills and concepts to be learned, the range and depth of the content, and the instructional methodologies that enable students to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge in science. When applying this criterion, consider all students participating in all programs offered by the school.

Students discover and learn about the natural world by using the methods of science as extensions of their own curiosity and wonder. Students acquire knowledge of the biological and physical sciences from a balanced science curriculum which includes the fundamental concepts, terms, processes, and skills. Building on their understanding of science concepts, students learn about the logic of the scientific method, the techniques of the science laboratory, and the applications of science to the world around us. Students also develop the science process or critical thinking skills of science: observing, comparing, organizing, inferring, relating, and applying.

Instructional methods and the sequential introduction of new experiences in the primary grades lay the foundation for more conceptual content in the intermediate grades. Instructional methods emphasize using scientific techniques as learning techniques; lessons regularly require students to observe and interpret phenomena in natural and laboratory settings. Concepts and theories from readings are applied to observed phenomena. Basic science texts are supplemented by a variety of materials which include laboratory specimens, scientific equipment, and an array of simulations that employ technology. Community resources such as local scientists and engineers, parks and nature trails, and science and natural museums are used to expand the science program.

Basic skills are applied and extended throughout the science program. Students learn how to read scientific writing, create and develop graphs and charts, solve complex problems involving different kinds of data, apply mathematics skills in analyzing data, record observations in an organized fashion, write laboratory and research reports, and explain scientific material orally.

- Students experience science as a regular part of their curriculum.
  - Science instruction is provided on a regular basis. (Students devote at least one-half hour per day, on the average, to learning science.)
  - Science goals and curriculum standards are reinforced throughout the school program (in both academic and extracurricular activities).
  - Students' progress in science is monitored, and feedback is given to students and parents.
- Instructional content focuses on conceptual understanding of the facts, principles, and theories of science as the foundation on which the processes, techniques, and applications of science are based. Teachers cultivate students' concept formation beyond rote facts and vocabulary.
- Students receive instruction in a comprehensive balanced science curriculum which includes:
  - The life, earth, and physical sciences
  - The interdependence of people and the natural environment
  - The historical development of science by persons and cultures of different backgrounds
  - The relationship between science, technology, and society
  - Participatory (hands-on) laboratory techniques
  - Facts about careers in science and technology
- Students observe and conduct experiments to learn scientific processes, including:
  - Observing
  - Comparing
  - Organizing
  - Inferring
  - Relating
  - Applying
- In addition to hands-on experiences, students learn science content from field observations, teacher demonstrations, group experiments, individual science fair projects, and a variety of print and electronic media as a part of their regular instruction.
- Assignments include such activities as:
  - Observing and recording natural phenomena inside and outside the school
  - Pursuing science projects involving teacher guidance and parent involvement

- Teachers lead discussions which challenge students to reason and think about their own ideas and perceptions of nature. Students are encouraged to articulate their own naive theories and test them against the accumulated evidence and knowledge of science.

- Students apply thinking and communications skills in learning science. Examples include:

  - Using computational skills in recording and analyzing data
  - Using graphs and charts to summarize and portray data
  - Reading scientific writing
  - Writing research reports and the results of lab experiments
  - Presenting scientific material orally

- Community resources enrich the science program, including student interactions with scientists, engineers, and technicians. Field trips to science and natural history museums, tide pools, and nature trails are also encouraged.

The history-social science criterion focuses on the effect of the history-social science program, the skills and concepts to be learned, the range and depth of the content, and the way in which the instruction received by the students enables them to acquire the skills and knowledge that make up history-social science. When applying this criterion, consider all students participating in all programs offered by the school.

Students are engaged in and excited about the study of history and social science, which are regular parts of the instructional program at all grade levels. The elementary curriculum prepares students for higher grade level study of the growth of civilization and the development of constitutional democracy. Students develop an understanding and appreciation of democratic ideals, including cooperation, peaceful change, civic responsibility, honesty, respect for others, equality of opportunity, universal education, and respect for law. Students participate in democratic processes within the school setting and are encouraged to apply those principles in the community.

Instructional activities in the lower grades draw from the lives and events of history that interest the young child and introduce the topics of social science as they apply to the experiences of family member, student, friend, teammate, consumer, and citizen.

Activities in higher grades draw from lives of individuals and events which have shaped the history of California and the United States. Attention is given to the growth of indigenous civilizations and the arrival of Europeans, Africans, and Asians and the transplant of their cultures to the Western Hemisphere. Students discuss and apply the topics of social science--tradition, values, power, change, conflict, social control, cooperation, interdependence, and causality.

Instruction emphasizes group discussion and team projects. Students are guided to think and to write critically, using evidence, reasoning, and judgment as they analyze historical, political, and socioeconomic situations. Controversial issues are addressed appropriately for the age level and maturity of the students.

- There is a definite period of time in the school day for instruction in history-social science.
- In the lower grades, students are reading interesting stories about events and individuals that have had an impact on life in America, California, and their community.
- Students in grades 4 through 6 study the history and geography of California, the United States, and the world.
- Teachers help students make hypotheses, generalize, infer, compare and contrast, and write analytically about historical and current events, using research, evidence, reasoning, and judgment. Activities planned for this purpose are frequent, including:
  - Writing reports and essays
  - Researching information
  - Analyzing historical and social situations
  - Discussing and debating issues
  - Doing homework that extends classroom activities
  - Speaking publicly
- Physical and political geography are part of the curriculum. Students recognize and interpret various kinds of charts, graphs, and maps, land and water forms, and current and past political boundaries.
- Teachers use literature, biographies, and documents to motivate and enlighten students. Music and art of the period and the culture being studied are part of the curriculum.
- In higher grades students research and read to acquire a knowledge of the major eras of U.S. history.
- There is an organized current events program where students report, analyze, interpret, and discuss information from a variety of sources, including magazine and newspaper articles, radio and television, audiovisual aids, films, political cartoons, and class speakers.
- Teachers use group discussions to help students understand and relate together historical economic and social events and ideas.
- Students work together in pairs or small groups in developing research projects, reports, dramas, and plays in which knowledge can be interpreted and applied.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The visual and performing arts criterion focuses on the effect of the visual and performing arts program on students. Completeness of content, identification of skills and concepts to be learned, the range and depth of the content, and the way in which the instruction received by the students enable them to acquire skills and knowledge in the visual and performing arts. When applying this criterion, consider all students participating in all programs offered by the school.

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through grade six, students engage in art experiences which teach them how to enjoy and value major works of art and how to express themselves through their own art activities, which include both the visual and performing arts. These experiences progress from perception and creative expression toward complex and high level conceptual development as students are able to relate the arts to personal experience. The art experiences, which range from frequent short projects to activities sustained over a long period of time, enable students to develop creative capacities, auditory and interpretive skills, and awareness of movement and sound. Teachers structure time for students to apply creativity and originality in activities that help them develop visual images, communicate ideas, and express individual thoughts and feelings.

Performing arts activities include drama, dance, and music. Activities in drama focus on elements, actions, and characterizations. They provide a vehicle for student expression. Students develop improvisations and plays, view theatrical events, express characterization of simple situations, and convey emotional qualities through speech and formal acting techniques. Students develop their intuition about movement as an expression through dance. Music experiences are continuous throughout the grades and enable the students to develop an appreciation of a wide variety of music. Students are knowledgeable about music.

Students study, understand, and appreciate the visual and performing arts traditions of their own and other cultures. They learn to evaluate the aesthetic, moral, cultural, and historical content of art and to relate these elements to the work of various artists. Students demonstrate knowledge of historical and cultural development through different forms of artistic expression and make cultural and historical connections, including analyzing symbols, myths, metaphors, and style. Fine arts are part of the reading and literature, history, social science, math, science, and language arts curricula.

The principal and staff members support the visual and performing arts program as an integral part of the students' education. Guidance and encouragement from staff result in regular student participation in music, drama, dance, and visual arts programs. They encourage serious and promising students to pursue their demonstrated interest in the visual and performing arts. Students are exposed to examples of high quality art, and practicing artists are brought into the school program on a regular basis. Community resources, including local exhibits and museums, are used to extend learning beyond the classroom. Students' artwork is displayed throughout the school and is used to enhance the overall appearance of the school.

- Time is specifically allocated to instruction in the visual and performing arts.
- Students have early and regular access to diversified art experiences, beginning with creative expression and moving toward more complex and higher level conceptual development.
- Fine arts experiences range from short activities to projects sustained over a long period of time. These experiences include:
  - Art history
  - Art appreciation
  - Production
- During instructional art time, students use a variety of media to:
  - Express their individual ideas, thoughts, and feelings in simple media.
  - Develop visual and tactile perception.
  - Master technical skills of creative expression.
  - Communicate their ideas and feelings through graphic symbols, using balance and contrast.
  - Demonstrate their abilities to apply design elements and principles.

- Students develop dramatic abilities and understandings through improvisation and plays, including:

  - Dramatizing literary selections
  - Viewing theatrical events emphasizing player-audience relationships and audience etiquette
  - Expressing characterization of simple situations
  - Conveying emotional qualities through speech and formal acting techniques

- Dance experiences are provided to students as a significant mode of expression and include:

  - Kinesthetic experience of movement
  - Response to sensory stimuli
  - Motor efficiency and control

- Musical activities include:

  - Learning to use simple musical instruments, including the human voice
  - Singing and/or playing a musical instrument before a group
  - Listening to, interpreting, and critiquing vocal and instrumental music
  - Learning the history and mechanics of music
  - Presenting musical productions

- Visual and performing arts opportunities are integrated into other areas of the curriculum, including reading and literature, history, social science, math, science, and English language arts.

- The principal and staff members perceive fine arts as central to the students' education.

- Serious and promising students are encouraged to pursue their demonstrated interests in the visual and performing arts, including activities that encourage students to:

  - Participate in the instrumental music program and select a musical instrument according to their growth level.
  - Work with artists in residence or other appropriate modes.
  - Utilize community resources, including local arts exhibits that extend artistic learning beyond the classroom.

- Student artwork appears throughout the school and is used to enhance the overall appearance of the school setting.

The schoolwide effectiveness criterion focuses on how conditions at the school combine to enable students to be successful learners. It deals with the school's curriculum, the implementation of the curriculum, the impact of the curriculum on the students, and instructional methodology. In applying this criterion, consider schoolwide activities that support academic growth for all students.

School and district policies and practices reflect an academic focus on student learning and achievement. Students participate in a broad-based curriculum which includes reading and literature, oral and written expression, mathematics, science, history-social science, visual and performing arts, and physical education and health. The goals and objectives of this written curriculum clearly define rigorous content consistent with professional and community standards. The curriculum emphasizes enabling students to apply what they learn.

The selection of instructional materials, the design of lessons and assignments, and the determination of the scope and focus of assessment are coordinated and aligned with the knowledge, skills, and values defined in the goals and objectives of the written curriculum. The sequence of instruction received by the student reflects a progressive shift in emphasis from basic-skills-centered instruction to content- and application-centered instruction. High expectations for what students learn reflect a schoolwide belief that all students can learn.

Student achievement, as determined by a variety of measures, reflects significant increase or is maintained at a high level. The assessment data evidence learning across the curriculum. The content of the assessment is aligned with the curriculum, and instructional practices and procedures are modified on the basis of that assessment. Students are learning content beyond factual knowledge and rote skills, including knowledge of ideas, concepts, and issues, and complex thinking and communication skills such as analysis, interpretation, evaluation, problem solving, and application. Assessment data indicate that students with differing abilities and needs (e.g., students of high ability, disadvantaged, limited-English-proficient (LEP), or handicapped students) are achieving at their highest potential.

Students' interest in the subjects being learned is evident. There is a maximum use of time for instruction, free from interruption, and students are actively engaged in learning activities. Learning time is extended through regular homework, which is integral to the learning task and which challenges students to apply what they have learned. Instruction is teacher-directed, using a variety of teaching strategies and materials matched to both the content to be learned and the needs and strengths of students. Students' daily work is at a level of difficulty which both challenges them to learn and grow and provides experiences of success and competence in learning. Students' exposure to new concepts and skills is initiated through direct instruction from the teacher. There is timely teacher response to student work to verify comprehension, especially during early practice of new skills. Students are coached by the teacher as they practice and apply previously learned material. Teachers encourage and guide students to think and communicate about what they are learning.

- The academic program is the focus of the goals and objectives developed by the principal, staff, and parents at the school.
- Students receive broad-based curriculum, including instruction in reading, writing, oral language, literature, mathematics, science, history, social science, visual and performing arts, physical education, and health. All students have access to this balanced curriculum.
- Instruction and assessment in each subject area are coordinated and aligned with the goals and objectives of the written curriculum. Students' instruction in basic skills and content areas reflects the goals and objectives of the curriculum.
- The goals and objectives of the curriculum are clearly defined and are evident in:
  - Lesson plans and classroom work
  - Selection of instructional materials
  - Student assignments
  - Assessment practices
- Grade-level expectations are established and are put into practice for skills, knowledge, and values to be learned in each area of the curriculum. They reflect high standards and expectations. Grade-level expectations have also been set for homework, the required reading lists by subject area, and the quantity and quality of writing assignments in each subject area.

- The curriculum exhibits rigorous academic content consistent with professional standards exemplified in California state frameworks, county courses of study, curriculum planning handbooks, publications of professional curriculum associations, and the district course of study; and with community standards and expectations.

- There is an emphasis on enabling students to use and apply what they learn, beyond rote drill and practice, as evidenced in:

  - Allocation of class time
  - Quality of in-class assignments and homework
  - Samples of student work
  - Standards of achievement

- Assessment data in the major curriculum areas indicate that student achievement (including upper quartile, middle achieving, lower quartile, LEP, and disadvantaged students) is increasing or being maintained at a high level for:

  - Rote skills and facts
  - Ideas, concepts, and issues
  - Thinking and communication skills, such as formulating and solving problems, analyzing and interpreting information, drawing inferences, evaluating complex situations, thinking critically, expressing thoughts logically in written and oral form, or forming independent judgments

- Assessment is aligned with curriculum and instruction and includes a variety of methods suited to what is being assessed:

  - Work samples, demonstrations, presentations
  - Teacher-made tests
  - Textbook chapter tests/questions
  - Criterion-referenced tests
  - Norm-referenced tests

- Students learn practical study skills as a part of the regular instructional program. They include:

  - Note-taking
  - Outlining
  - Reading for main ideas
  - Following good study habits

- The curriculum at each grade level is articulated with the next higher grade. Articulation between the regular and special program staffs is frequent and regular.

- Classroom time is well managed for maximum concentration on teaching and learning activities. Teachers' interactions with students are frequent and related to the content of the curriculum. Students understand their assignments and have sufficient time to complete them; their progress is regularly monitored; and they receive timely feedback on their work.

- Direct instruction by the teacher is evident at critical points in learning:

  - Presenting new concepts and skills
  - Modeling
  - Guiding early practice of new skills
  - Coaching extended applications
  - Encouraging and guiding students to think and communicate about what they learn

- Assignments are challenging to students and yet within reach so that hard work brings success. Students are proud of what they accomplish, and their academic success is recognized by the principal, their teachers, and their peers.

- A variety of teaching strategies and materials is used. In this way the content to be learned and the needs of the students are matched.

- Teaching methods are geared to the intended level of learning, application, analysis, synthesis, and judgment of the material presented.

- All students are expected to complete every homework assignment. Homework is reviewed and returned in a timely manner.

- Instructional materials, approaches, and pacing are differentiated, as appropriate, for students with different needs and abilities.

SPECIAL NEEDS

The special needs criterion focuses on the extent to which the services provided for students with special needs enable them to be successful learners in the regular program. The criterion applies to limited-English-proficient students, educationally disadvantaged students, those students achieving at a level significantly below their peers, gifted and talented students, and students receiving special education instruction and services.

The information gained through an assessment of the special needs services is added to what the reviewers have learned about the instruction of students as they participate in the regular program. Information about how students are learning and what students are learning in the specific curriculum areas is also included to form a complete picture of the effect of instruction on students with special needs.

The special services the students are receiving support their successful participation in the regular program and each student with special needs is expected to master to the extent of his or her ability the same curriculum provided all students. For the high ability or high achieving student, special services remove ceilings, raise the conceptual level, and extend the breadth and depth of the regular program. The curriculum, materials, and methods used in the regular classroom are appropriate to the special needs and activities of each student whether those needs result from a handicapping condition, a primary language other than English, or achievement levels significantly above or below those of the majority of students. Student work is rigorous and challenging for each student.

Students are experiencing success in learning the skills and concepts of the curriculum commensurate with their highest potential and are feeling positive about themselves as learners. Each adult working with the students is knowledgeable about their needs, capabilities, and learning progress, and expects them to be successful in school. The special services received by students with multiple needs have been prioritized so that the greatest needs are being addressed first. Ongoing communication and collaboration among the classroom teacher(s) and specialist staff members have resulted in an integrated program for each student, allowing him or her to experience a continuity of services. Special services supplement the quality of instruction students would have received from the regular program alone.

- Students with special needs have equal access to the curriculum provided for all students.
  - The total curriculum received by students with special needs is well balanced. It includes fine arts, science, and social studies, in addition to the basic skills of writing, reading, language, and math.
  - As much as possible, special services are provided within the regular classroom setting.
  - When students must be pulled out of class to receive special services, the pull-out sessions are scheduled for times that do not preclude the students' acquisition of the basic skills and knowledge of the curriculum.
  - The use of the primary languages of the limited-English-proficient students allows them to continue learning the basic skills and knowledge of the curriculum at a normal pace while developing fluency in English.
  - Students on individual education plans (IEPs) participate in the regular program to the full extent permitted by their handicap.

- The special services received by each special needs student support his or her participation in the regular program.
  - Special services instruction is coordinated with regular instruction through use of textbooks and other instructional materials, as well as through articulation of the skills and concepts being learned.
  - The curriculum materials and methods of instruction used in each setting are appropriate to the student's needs, abilities, and language proficiencies.
  - Learning activities in each setting build upon and extend the student's current level of knowledge.
  - Special services are provided with minimum disruption to the student's participation in the regular classroom.
- The lessons and assignments received by the students with special needs are as rigorous and challenging for their diagnosed level as those received by all students.

- The regular classroom teachers and the specialist teachers expect each student to achieve up to his or her highest potential.
- The lessons and assignments challenge each student to (1) develop the critical thinking skills of inquiring, analyzing, solving problems, and evaluating situations; and (2) exercise creativity.

- Student work shows that students are experiencing success in learning the skills and concepts of the curriculum, and it is evident that they feel successful as learners in each curricular area.

- The regular classroom teachers and those providing special services meet regularly to plan and replan each student's program of instruction.

- Both initial and ongoing assessment data are shared between the regular classroom teachers and the specialist staff.
- There are regular opportunities for regular and specialist teachers to meet and share information about the student's progress and to plan instructional and support services for him or her, such as through team teaching or a student study team approach.
- Regular classroom teachers and specialist staff members freely communicate with each other on an informal as well as a formal basis.
- Parents are kept fully informed of their child's progress.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The learning environment criterion focuses on how effectively the school and classroom environment support and encourage each student's academic, personal, and social growth. In applying this criterion, consider (1) classroom environment; and (2) school environment. Be sure to include all participating students, including students receiving special services.

The learning environment of the school reflects an academic focus. The principal, staff members, parents, and students perceive school as a place to learn and hold high standards and expectations for student achievement and behavior. They view learning as the most important source of joy and personal significance offered to each child by the school. Staff members are task-oriented and work to maximize the time students are engaged in academically productive activity; classroom interruptions are held to a minimum. Students are motivated and exhibit initiative for learning; they are comfortable approaching their teachers to gain or clarify information. Teachers manage the learning environment so that all students have equal opportunities to learn.

Respect and support among and between students and staff members are evident throughout the school. Students and staff members are proud of and enjoy their school. Together they develop and maintain a safe and orderly environment for learning. Schoolwide rules are reasonable and known by all, and each staff member enforces the rules consistently and equitably.

Schoolwide procedures for recognition of and awards for student achievement and citizenship are designed so that each student has the opportunity to be recognized for good citizenship and for significant achievement.

Staff members routinely work together to identify and solve day-to-day problems of instruction, student discipline, student schedules, and so forth to achieve schoolwide goals and objectives. The morale of staff members is high and is maintained through established procedures for recognizing individual strengths and special contributions to the students and the school community.

Home-school communication is well established and ongoing. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress in school, and input from the parents is sought on a regular basis. Resources of the community are used to enhance the learning environment of the school.

- It is evident throughout the school that the primary business of the school is learning.
  - Students and staff show enthusiasm for learning and pride in the environmental conditions which encourage learning.
  - Students are punctual and eagerly settle into work at the beginning of each instructional period, working through each assignment.
  - Teachers are learning-oriented; they begin on time and maintain student involvement throughout the lesson.
  - Announcements do not interrupt instruction.
  - Classroom disruptions resulting from pulling students out for special services are minimal.
  - Teachers manage instruction so that each student receives an equal share of teaching time, attention, and learning material.

- Standards and expectations for student achievement and behavior are widely known.
  - Students, parents, and staff members are all involved in setting standards for behavior.
  - Students and staff members alike believe that the school rules are reasonable and are consistently and equitably enforced.
  - Students are taught the school and classroom rules and are held accountable for maintaining them throughout the school year.
  - Students perceive school as a safe place to be and feel that their teachers, the principal, and other instructional and support staff support them as learners.

- The cleanliness and appearance of the classrooms, halls, restrooms and school grounds and the enthusiasm of the students and staff members attest to the pride the students and staff members feel in their school.

- Students and staff members receive recognition for good work.
  - Students are recognized for their citizenship and for academic achievements in assemblies, by classroom or grade level; through special recognition by the principal; through award notices sent to parents; and so forth.
  - Teachers and other instructional staff members receive recognition that acknowledges excellence in teaching, curricular knowledge, special abilities to work with other staff members and with students, and willingness to contribute additional time to student activities.
- Staff members work cooperatively in developing and carrying out schoolwide policies. They respect each other as professionals and recognize one another's individual strengths.
- Parents are kept informed of the progress of their children on an ongoing basis, as well as school goals, school rules and student responsibilities, homework policies, and special activities of the school. This is done through newsletters, teacher and principal communiques, conferences, and so forth.
- Parents have regular opportunities to share their expectations regarding the school program, including participation at school site council and other council meetings.
- Resources of the community, such as parks, businesses, libraries and museums, community groups, and local governmental agencies, support the school and are used to enhance the learning environment of the school.

The staff development criterion focuses on how effective staff development activities have been in increasing the skills and knowledge needed by adults in the school to implement an effective instructional program. In applying this criterion, consider the effect of staff development on the instructional program, including services for students with special needs and abilities.

Staff development activities are planned, carried out, and evaluated for the purpose of improving the job-related knowledge and skills of principals, teachers, instructional aides, classroom volunteers, and other student support personnel, including parents who regularly interact with students at all grade levels. By increasing awareness and refining skills and by changing attitudes and behaviors, these activities are enabling staff members to deliver curriculum and instruction which is rigorous, challenging, and responsive to student needs.

The content of the staff development program clearly reflects established school goals for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student achievement. A careful assessment of participants' strengths, competencies, interests, and needs as they relate to the school's goals is used in determining content. Staff members understand the goals and objectives of the school's planned program, their individual responsibilities for implementing the program, and how what they do fits with what others do. Each adult learns whatever is necessary to carry out effectively his or her part of the program, and staff members utilize information and techniques acquired through staff development activities in their day-to-day instruction.

The staff development program includes effective teaching methods and techniques. Instructional strategies include modeling, coaching, and other follow-up support in the classroom and are directly related to staff needs. Adult interaction at the school sustains high interest in professional growth and improvement. There is an obvious commitment to continued participation in staff development activities. The staff development program is actively supported by the administration through participation and commitment of time and resources.

- The content of the staff development program clearly reflects established school goals for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student achievement.
  - The staff development program is school-based and addresses both individual and schoolwide goals.
  - An assessment of student progress in relation to the identified curriculum is used to determine any areas of instruction requiring either individual or whole-staff instruction and support.
  - An assessment of the participants' strengths, competencies, interests, and needs is used to determine the content of the staff development program.
- The staff development program is designed to improve the job-related skills and knowledge of all personnel who work with students at the school.
- The staff development activities help staff members refine existing skills as well as learn new skills, develop attitudes and behaviors that are more effective in the classroom setting, and gain knowledge necessary for effective implementation of the curriculum.
- It is evident through classroom observation and from talking with staff members that they are using information and techniques which they learned through staff development activities.
- Staff members understand the goals and objectives of the planned program, their responsibilities in carrying out the program, and the interconnection of those responsibilities with the responsibilities of others in implementing the program.
- Those who conduct the staff development program use effective teaching practices, including:
  - Modeling
  - Guided practice
  - Coaching
  - Peer observation, support, and assistance
- Staff are directly involved in planning staff development activities and conducting an evaluation of them and are committed to continued participation.
- Staff development activities are systematically evaluated, and the evaluation results are used to design or redesign staff development activities.
- The administration actively supports the program through participation, allocation of time for staff development activities, and use of fiscal and personnel resources.

The leadership criterion focuses on the extent to which schoolwide leadership is used to promote and support the instructional program for all students. In applying this criterion, consider all avenues of leadership within the school setting, including those vested in the principal, assistant principal, program coordinators, resource teachers, grade level chairpersons, and teachers in a leadership role on committees and special assignments.

School leaders, who include the principal, assistant principal, program coordinators, resource teachers, grade level chairpersons, and teachers in a leadership role on committees and special assignments, are knowledgeable about the curriculum and instructional practices. Leadership supports and encourages staff members' efforts to improve instruction.

There is a strong academic orientation throughout the school program based on clear expectations for learning and behavior from school leaders. The local governing board, the superintendent, and the principal support this common purpose through policies, personnel practices, and allocation of resources. School leaders clarify and promote school goals and high expectations for achievement.

Teachers regularly receive timely and meaningful feedback based on classroom observation, student performance, and discussion. Staff differences in skill, styles, and personal values are considered in making assignments; these differences are considered in justly allocating human resources to students.

Leadership and responsibility are shared among staff members; adults model the leadership and cooperation they expect from students; staff members participate in many decisions; delegated leadership is respected.

School leaders promote and support improvements in the school program consistent with school and district goals. Time is allocated to a regular process of analyzing and evaluating data about student performance and motivation, staff performance and morale, and instructional program implementation. Based on discussion and understanding of what causes the results evident in these data, plans for improvement are made and implemented. There is broad-based participation in and commitment to this well-organized and well-managed improvement process. Curriculum and staff development resources are allocated in support of the planned improvements. Leadership encourages and supports the use of outside practitioners and experts in the curriculum areas being improved. District and state curriculum guides and materials and standards from curriculum and other professional associations are available and utilized in planning.

School leaders focus the motivation and talents of staff members on improving and sustaining excellence in the educational program of the school. Staff and student morale is high, as evidenced by good attendance and enthusiasm for school as a place to learn. School leaders work harmoniously with the community, and parents are active supporters of the school program.

- Goals, standards, and expectations have been stated by school and school district leaders for student achievement and behavior. These statements are central to planning and implementation at all levels and are well known throughout the school.
- Staff members expect all students to achieve these standards, and all adults feel responsible for the achievement and behavior of all students.
- The content of curriculum and the sequence and materials of instruction are coordinated throughout the grade levels in each curricular area.
- Schoolwide procedures for placement and promotion of students are established and consistently used.
- School leaders protect instruction from interruption by stressing discipline and supporting teachers in discipline matters, by keeping public places (halls, grounds) quiet, and by minimizing classroom interruptions from the intercom, bells, and/or visitors.
- Criteria, procedures, and practices for personnel evaluation at all levels demonstrate the importance of learning as the focus of the school district.
- Instructional supervisors give timely feedback and coaching to teachers based on classroom observations, student performance, and discussion. Observation with feedback includes but is not limited to:

  - Implementation of curricular goals and objectives

- Maximum use of time for instruction
- Interaction with students
- Lessons' design and presentation
- Development of thinking and communication skills
- Opportunities to express creativity
- Relationship of the strengths and weaknesses of various teaching methods to the content and learning goal

- Adults model good leadership and cooperation.

- The school board, superintendent, and principal support the fair and consistent application of school rules and the recognition of positive learning behavior.

- Leaders organize, manage, and support an ongoing improvement process which has broad-based staff and parent commitment with participation. This process includes:

  - Evaluation of student and staff performance
  - Evaluation of the curriculum and its implementation
  - Analysis of symptoms and determination of causes
  - Plans for action
  - Strategies for implementation

- Assistance and leadership from outside the district are utilized, including materials, training, guides, and standards, from:

  - Curriculum associations
  - Professional organizations
  - Offices of county superintendents of schools and the State Department of Education
  - Institutions of higher education
  - Teacher education and computer centers, Special Education Regional Network, and other regional training centers

- Leaders allocate resources--material and human--into instruction and the improvement of instruction.

- Leaders participate in regularly scheduled professional development which emphasizes curriculum and instructional practices.

The planning, implementation, and evaluation criterion focuses on how effective the planning, implementation, and evaluation procedures used by the staff and parents at the school have been in developing and delivering an effective program for each student. This process involves determining what in the program needs improving and how to make the necessary improvements. In applying this criterion, judge the quality of the improvement process in terms of the effect of planning, implementation, and evaluation activities on the program.

As a result of collaborative planning among staff members, the principal, and parents, there is a common understanding of what students will learn in school, how they will learn it, and how they will be supported as learners. The roles and responsibilities that students, parents, instructional and support staff members, and the principal will play in the learning process are known. The goals and improvement activities of the program are clearly defined and shared by staff members and students throughout the school. The allocation of resources, including time, and the working relationships of everyone at the school are focused on achieving these goals.

The school plan provides a focus for alignment of curriculum, instructional practices, and evaluation. The coordination of the instructional program across grade levels and the coordination between the regular program and special services for students with special needs are maintained through ongoing planning efforts of the teachers, specialist teachers, and the principal. Good communication, coordination, and mutual support are evident among all staff members, and they are committed to the implementation of their planned program.

Procedures used for ongoing planning and evaluation are known to all staff members and are routinely used. Modifications to the program are made in response to the observed effects of the curriculum and instructional activities on students. The support activities are directly linked to the instructional program and promote student learning.

- There is a collaborative planning process that involves staff members, the principal, and parents.
  - In School Improvement schools, the school site council serves as the locus for the planning process.
  - In schools serving students with special needs, parents of these students have a voice in the planning and evaluation of these services.
  - There are opportunities for all parents and all staff members to be involved actively in defining schoolwide goals and objectives as participants in the planning process at the school.
  - All parents and staff members have opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of the planned program and the extent to which the goals and objectives are being attained.
  - Sufficient time is allocated to the planning process.
- There is common understanding throughout the school of what the students will learn, how they will learn it, and how they will be supported as learners.
  - Teachers are in agreement about what students are to learn in each curricular area, and at each grade level.
  - The major instructional strategies that were agreed on during the planning process are being used.
  - Schoolwide policies and practices for homework, discipline, student placement and promotion, and so forth that were agreed on during the planning process are being implemented.
- Each staff member understands the overall intent of the planned program, what his or her individual role and responsibilities are, and how those responsibilities relate to what others are doing or will do.
- All staff members, including those providing services to students with special needs, communicate with one another regularly and work together for program coordination and for mutual support. There is a high level of staff commitment to carrying out the program as planned.
- The procedures (formal and informal) used for planning, ongoing planning, and evaluation are widely known throughout the school. Staff members know:
  - Who is responsible for what
  - What kinds of evaluation data are routinely collected
  - How those data are analyzed, by whom, and how they are used in planning programmatic changes
  - How to use the ongoing planning process to institute programmatic changes

APPENDIX B: THE GUIDE FOR CONDUCTING THE SELF-STUDY

Introduction

The self-study is the foundation on which the program review is built and should be viewed as the beginning of the school's planning process. The self-study is an activity that includes an in-depth look at the quality of the curriculum, the effectiveness of the instruction, and the structure, organization, and governance of the institution and is carried out by the school community prior to the program review. The three main reasons why the self-study is so important to program planning and the process of program review are:

- The quality of the improvement effort is dependent on the quality of the data and the analysis of that data. Data collection and analysis occur mainly in the self-study phase of the review.

- The quality of the self-study in the eyes of the school community determines the meaning accorded the visit of the external review team and any subsequent planning.

- A high-quality self-study is central to accomplishing the three major portions of program review: (1) the development of a clear understanding of the school's instructional program; (2) the model for examining the effectiveness of the instructional program; and (3) the focus for the determination of the kind of changes that should occur to improve the program for students.

When thoroughly conducted, the self-study is an extremely rewarding experience for the school because it establishes a routine process for monitoring and improving the quality of the instructional program for the students. A school carrying out a half-hearted pro forma self-study will reap at best an ineffectual review and at worst a misleading and damaging external review that will result in meaningless planning for improvement.

For an effective self-study to be ensured, it must be conducted by individuals who know the students and the school best and can be objective about the quality of the instructional program offered to each student. When the school community conducts the self-study, there should be a broad base of school community involvement coupled with the assistance of a designated leader who is committed to the process. Those participating in the self-study must use the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria as the foundation for the examination of the instructional program. The criteria will also serve as the standard against which the quality of the school's instructional program will be held during the formal program review.

The "Guide for Conducting the Self-Study" has been included in this handbook to emphasize the importance of the self-study. In addition to the introduction, the guide is organized into sections describing the methods for organizing and conducting the self-study, the application of the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria to the school's instructional program, and implications for use during the formal program review.

Organizing for the Self-Study

The self-study is designed to promote a cohesive and coordinated view of the curriculum and the instructional program received by students at the school. In the implementation of the self-study, it is not sufficient to contribute only as an individual or to be interested only in certain grade levels or special program outcomes. Rather, the school must be considered as a whole. As the school community organizes for self-study, it will be establishing the procedures for the ways in which staff will be contributing. The staff of the school will be involved as (1) individuals; (2) members of special groups such as grade level, special project, or curriculum committees; and (3) members of the school community.

Each staff member will be involved individually in analyzing the school program's relationship to the curriculum as well as to the schoolwide criteria. At the individual level each member of the school community is charged with (1) conducting a self-analysis of practices that pertain to each criterion; (2) observing and providing feedback relative to applying the criteria; (3) contributing the most accurate data possible; (4) focusing the discussions he or she has with others about various aspects of the school's program and the impact of that program on the students; and (5) interpreting the data collected in light of the instructional program as a whole.

When applying the curriculum criteria during the self-study, all teachers are involved in comparing the curriculum to state and professional standards. (Curriculum frameworks, handbooks, and curriculum statements offer excellent starting points for this view of the instructional program.) The teachers further review the implementation of that curriculum by considering what the students actually receive. The resulting analysis of the quality of the curriculum offered at the school and the extent to which that curriculum is actually received by the student is judged against the program review quality criteria.

When applying the schoolwide criteria, all participants are involved in synthesizing their individual input into generalizations about the ongoing school program. The quality of this input will determine the usefulness of the information in identifying areas in need of improvement as well as areas of strength.

Establishing the Proper Perspective for the Self-Study

The first step in the self-study process is deciding what questions to ask, what activities to observe, and what data to review in order to develop the objective knowledge of the instructional program received by the students and to compare that information with the related quality criteria. Certain decisions not only constitute the critical first step of the self-study but also go a long way toward determining the usefulness of the self-study and the program review by establishing a schoolwide perspective of program quality. These decisions include what to observe; what students to follow through their day; what sorts of questions to ask the students, the staff members, the administrators, the council members, and others involved in the various parts of the program; what sorts of records to review, including students' work samples, students' achievement data, minutes of meetings, and so forth.

In the design of the procedures for collecting information about the school's program, certain sets of data should not be overlooked. They include the school performance report, with locally developed indicators of success; the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program from the last program review; and the results of the California Assessment Program tests and other norm-referenced tests analyzed for patterns of achievement for all students and for specific groups of students over time.

Good reviews and subsequent good planning occur when people have information and the energy to act on it. A self-study must not be so burdensome that it discourages quality interaction among staff, students, and the community. To avoid having the self-study feel like an academic exercise or meaningless paperwork, those organizing the self-study should keep in mind that:

- Information collected is to be used by the school and the external review team to meet the goals of the program review, such as diagnosis, improvement, and planning.
- The diagnosis provided by the self-study is shaped by the quality criteria.
- Individuals, program personnel, or the school community as a whole must not be overburdened.

Collecting Good Information for Use in the Self-Study

During a self-study process two main types of information are collected, artifacts and opinions. The artifacts of a self-study are the concrete materials collected. Artifacts range from examples of students' work and assignments to records and transcripts and to minutes of meetings. Artifacts constitute the best way for a school to check on the other major kind of information collected, opinions. It is important to solicit the opinions of students, parents, and staff members as part of the self-study. Opinions about a topic provide valuable information on the overall sense of a school. Wherever possible, people should be asked to provide examples or artifacts to support their opinions.

In sum, each school is urged to individualize its procedures for collecting information. If the suggestions for data collection are seen as items on a menu from which school personnel pick and choose what fits their situation, the information collected will be more meaningful and powerful. (NOTE: "The School Data Summary" found on page 49 in this guide will be of assistance as you begin to collect information about your instructional program.)

Using the Quality Criteria for the Self-Study

The criteria for elementary program review are grouped into two main sections: (1) curricular criteria; and (2) schoolwide criteria. The concepts embedded in the criteria are not new. They were included in many of the previously used review criteria, state handbooks, frameworks, and other materials. The criteria described in this handbook represent significant agreements in the current analysis of high quality standards for curriculum and effective elementary education. They were designed to incorporate good-sense notions of sound curriculum, effective educational practice, and applied organizational management.

The curriculum criteria that include reading, mathematics, written language, oral language, science, history-social science, visual and performing arts, and physical education follow the major themes captured in the frameworks, handbooks, and the curriculum guides. The curriculum criteria should be used to assess the quality of the content of the curriculum as well as the method of instruction employed to impart that curriculum.

The schoolwide criteria are designed to focus the school community on what students experience as individuals, as members of groups (special programs and other assistance patterns), and as a total student body. In most school settings separate groups of adults such as classroom teachers, special project personnel, support personnel, and administrators work with students on discrete aspects of content or need. Thus, students experience those discrete aspects and synthesize them into their total school experience. The adult work groups may lose sight of all the different pieces that students must put together. Using the criteria to look at the school and various programs in operation within the school will help the school community to see what the synthesized school experience is like for different kinds of students. The application of the schoolwide criteria during the self-study also helps to determine the degree of congruence between stated policy and what students and other members of the school community actually experience.

Both the curriculum and schoolwide criteria are summative statements of a high quality program that is actually experienced by the student. When applying the criteria during the self-study, members of the school community should ensure that the following occur:

- Everyone involved in the self-study must become knowledgeable about the contents of the criteria for elementary program review.

- Those responsible for applying the criteria must decide what procedures they will use and what specific information they will seek out in order to address the criteria. For example, how will they organize observations to ensure that all students in the school, including those with special needs, are considered? Whom will they talk to in order to maintain a broad perspective on the school setting? What artifacts should they review?

- The necessary information is collected. Then reviewers discuss what has been found, pooling information in order to develop a common perspective of the program in operation and its impact on students.

- The common perspective brought out in the discussion is then compared to the quality criteria. In the comparative process, areas of the program that reflect the description in the quality criterion are identified as program strengths. Those that do not match the criterion statements are potential areas for improvement.

- The group must then decide which of the potential improvement areas should be considered for an action plan. For example, which would have the greatest impact on the criterion area as a whole? Which would offer the greatest potential for success? In what sequence should they be approached?

- Finally, the conclusions of the group are recorded so that they can be included in the self-study summary and shared first with the school community, then with the visiting review team.

Developing the Self-Study Summary

Once all information has been gathered, analyzed, discussed, and compared to the quality criteria, a summary of the self-study is developed. This summary should convey a thoughtful review of the curriculum and the schoolwide program.

The summary should not be a lengthy document. As a rule of thumb, one page is probably not enough room to impart effectively what is true about each aspect of the school's program as compared with the quality criteria. On the other hand, a 40-page document may be too detailed to be of optimum use to those who are responsible for initiating change in curriculum, instruction, and schoolwide organization. In other words, those responsible for organizing the self-study should use common sense in developing a summary that communicates effectively.

The summary of the self-study should include the following:

- A written record of the result of comparing what is happening at the school with the issues, concepts, and ideas in each of the paragraphs of the quality criteria
- A summative value judgment about the results of that comparison
- Identification of priority areas of improvement
- Recognition of the strengths of the particular aspects of the program and/or aspects in which there has been significant improvement

The completed summary will include the results of the self-study for each of the quality criteria. Even though all curricular criteria are included in the summary, those curricular criteria selected for special focus during the review will most likely reflect greater depth and attention in the self-study summary. The conclusions reached in other areas, however, will be of great value to the school community in planning curricular, instructional, and organizational improvements.

How the Self-Study Is Used During the Review

During the program review the school's self-study is used as a base for discussion about the programs in operation at the site. It is shared with members of the review team during the review so that it can be used to frame the organization of the review and ensure that the important points are covered. As the review progresses, the team will use the self-study as a guide in reviewing the school's program, validating the results of the self-study when the findings of the review team confirm the results, and seeking additional information when the self-study results and the team findings are at variance.

When the diagnostic portion of the review is complete, the key planners, the principal, and the review team will consider the identified areas of improvement within the self-study as they make recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program and recognize areas of program strength.

THE SCHOOL DATA SUMMARY

Each school has a wealth of data which, when organized and presented for comparison and interpretation, constitute the school data summary. These data provide a meaningful base of objective information on which to build judgments about school program quality.

The organization and interpretation of data in the school data summary should be guided by educated hunches, open-minded exploration of patterns, confirming interpretations with supporting evidence, and common sense. It is a practical process that makes the best use of available information but retains a healthy skepticism.

Indicators

The following indicators are suggested elements of the data summary because they are commonly available in schools and provide data valuable to program review and school planning. The school's School Performance Report, both the locally and state-produced section, may already include some of these elements. Each school should examine its own available data and select the best data for its summary.

Outcome indicators include:

- California Assessment Program data (third and sixth grades)
  - Trends in raw scores
  - Percentile rank
  - Comparison to predicted score
  - Percent of students above Q3 and below Q1 over time
  - Skill area report comparing subareas of curriculum
  - Subgroup report showing trends over time
- Norm-referenced tests
  - Trends
  - Comparison to national norms
  - Curricular area comparisons
  - Percent of students above Q3 and below Q1 over time
- Criterion-referenced tests (including proficiency tests)
  - Percent of students achieving criterion levels
  - Trends
- Work samples
  - Holistic criteria
  - Grade level standards
- Attendance and tardies
  - Attendance patterns of all students
  - Attendance patterns of specific groups
  - Tardiness patterns for all students
  - Tardiness patterns for specific groups
  - Staff attendance
- Number of books read
- Number of writing assignments completed
- Library/media use

- Students' opinion of school climate
- Number of students referred to principal

Program indicators include:

- Instructional time
  - Total school day
  - Allotted time by subject and by grade
  - Time engaged in learning (from observation)
  - Homework by grade
- Extracurricular activities
  - Number of students in sports
  - Number of students in music
  - Number of students in drama
  - Number of students in academic clubs

Student indicators include:

- Enrollment patterns; e.g., increasing/decreasing
- AFDC count--increasing/decreasing
- LEP count--increasing/decreasing
- Parents' occupations
- Mobility/transiency of students

A combination of open-mindedness, common sense, and expert advice should be used in selecting data to include in the summary. The format should display information to facilitate making comparisons. Too much information can be just as confusing as too little. The summary should not cover every possible comparison among available data. Most data should be left in their natural forms, available for reference.

Data must be compared to some frame of reference. The most common comparisons useful to schools are:

- Criterion levels based on rational goals
- Past years' levels for the same school
- Other curricular areas or subcomponents within a curricular area
- Groups of students
- Other grade levels
- District, state, and national averages

One of the most useful means for interpreting data is a knowledge of trends over time. It is helpful to have data for as many years (or other time points) as possible so that the size of random fluctuations can be estimated. Steady movement up or down over three or more years is usually an indication of real change. A one-year spurt is usually difficult to interpret and should not be relied on. One way of validating an apparent trend is to look for parallel patterns in related data. If reading achievement is improving across several different measures (e.g., CAP tests, district criterion-referenced tests, and number of books read), then it is safe to interpret these results as real improvement. If, on the other hand, results on only one measure are moving up and those on the others are constant or going down, alternative explanations must be seriously considered. The

policy significance of trends can be illuminated by comparing these trends to the trends in other schools and in district, state, and national averages. Schools with assessment data that are not consistent with state and national trends are likely to be schools with powerful and unique programmatic or demographic influences on student outcomes.

In the development of strategies for improving the program, it is often useful to compare data among curricular areas or subcomponents of curricular areas. By themselves, these comparisons can be misleading, so it is advisable to tie them to a reference point by using trends; that is, by comparing trends among curricular areas. National, state, district, or even school test score averages can be used. Data from comparison schools can be used in the same way. Criterion levels established as school objectives can also provide a standard of comparison between areas. But since these criterion levels are difficult to justify empirically, their use for other comparisons is questionable.

Evaluating the performance of groups of students is very important for program planning. Comparison by groups can also be misleading when viewed in isolation. These same types of reference points can be used to tie down student group interpretations in the manner suggested for curricular areas. Trends can be compared for the high, middle, and low quartiles; for LEP students; and for the disadvantaged. Counts and proportions are often more useful than averages in looking at specific groups. Very often, a comparison of program data among different groups reveals differences in the treatment of students. These program differences can be evaluated to determine whether they are intentional or are the result of inadvertent inequities.

Comparisons to national, state, and district distributions and averages can be useful by themselves. Data from schools with similar background factors are sometimes available. While comparisons with these schools can provide a sense of relative standing, matching is very dangerous and frequently misleading. These overall comparisons are more useful for setting goals and measuring progress than for discovering clues to program improvements.

The measures employed should be evaluated to determine how well they focus on program goals. It is easy to overvalue what is measured and undervalue what is truly important. An excellent assessment of an unimportant goal should not weigh as much in the decision-making process as a merely adequate assessment of a very important goal.

A very important consideration in interpreting data in curricular areas is the alignment of what is measured with what is taught or intended to be taught. Many tests overemphasize low level skills and facts, while the current trends in curriculum are toward higher level skills, ideas, and concepts. State and national test developers are making changes in their tests to reflect this shifting emphasis in the curriculum, but each school should make sure the available data cover the curriculum as it is intended to be taught.

A related issue is the match of assessment method to what is being assessed. For example, an analysis and holistic judgment of work samples, demonstrations, and student presentations are often the best methods for addressing higher order thinking and communication skills. Teacher and textbook-related assessments generally match curriculum very well, although comparative data are not readily available. State and national tests provide excellent comparative information, although their fit to the school program is only general.

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